

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	There are no sermon notes, however there is a video at the end of the sermon which should play automatically once you move to the slide
Other Notes	Linda Swan will give a report on Annual Conference before Joys and Concerns. There are pictures on the screen to which she will refer.

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is in response to the Orlando nightclub shootings.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because our faith can sustain us during dark times and it is important to consider the Orlando nightclub shootings in light of our faith.

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon is preached as part of the James series before a Sunday off for Andrew. On June 12, 2016, a mass shooting terrorist attack and hate crime occurred inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, United States. Fifty people died, including the gunman, who was killed by Orlando police after a three-hour standoff.

What are the next action steps?

Take a moment
Remember some of the basics of our faith.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that the Holy Spirit comes “to help our weakness. We don’t know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans.”¹



¹ Romans 8:26, CEB.

Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Change Lives
2. Share

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. James
2. Matthew
3. Romans

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, Eldorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, Orlando, nightclub, shooting, theodicy, grief, faith, life

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James 4:1-12, CEB

What is the source of conflict among you? What is the source of your disputes? Don't they come from your cravings that are at war in your own lives? You long for something you don't have, so you commit murder. You are jealous for something you can't get, so you struggle and fight. You don't have because you don't ask. You ask and don't have because you ask with evil intentions, to waste it on your own cravings.

You unfaithful people! Don't you know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the world's friend becomes God's enemy. Or do you suppose that scripture is meaningless? Doesn't God long for our faithfulness in the life he has given to us? But he gives us more grace. This is why it says, God stands against the proud, but favors the humble. Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Cry out in sorrow, mourn, and weep! Let your laughter become mourning and your joy become sadness. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Brothers and sisters, don't say evil things about each other. Whoever insults or criticizes a brother or sister insults and criticizes the Law. If you find fault with the Law, you are not a doer of the Law but a judge over it. There is only one lawgiver and judge, and he is able to save and to destroy. But you who judge your neighbor, who are you?

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

Series Review

We all have choices in life. Often, it seems, that we have to choose one or the other: Right or Left. This or That. True or False. Stop or Go. Sometimes, the answer is Both / And. Join us for a four-week series in worship as we consider the message of the book of James and how to live as disciples in our everyday life.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

Take Notes - Bulletin

I invite you to take notes during the message today. You can find a place in your bulletin or if you have a mobile device you can take notes and save them in the Bible App. Just open the Bible App, click on "More"

and then “Events”
You’ll find us on the map.

God Speaking

I pray that you will hear God speaking to you sometime during the service today. Listen for God’s word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

Tool for Spiritual Growth

Then, take this bulletin home with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture.

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Orlando nightclub shooting

Scripture Connection

James is writing to the general church and the words of this book make a connection between our faith and the way that we live every day. In the passage of scripture before us this morning, James writes these words as guidance for us in responding to the recognition of our own sin – when we recognize those times that we have strayed from God’s path.

“Cry out in sorrow, mourn, and weep! Let your laughter become mourning and your joy become sadness.”²

These were words of guidance for people of faith when we recognize our own sin. Yet, sometimes we don’t have to be reminded to:

Cry out in sorrow, mourn and weep.

Sometimes, we find ourselves in circumstances where we can’t do anything else. This has been one of those weeks.

News and Notifications

Last Sunday, I began to see notifications on my phone of a shooting in Orlando. I named those affected by the shooting in Orlando during our time of prayer in worship,

² James 4:9, CEB.

yet did not realize the full weight of the events. I paid attention to the news as details continued to emerge throughout the day and into the night.

Summary of Event

Wikipedia describes the event in this way:

“On June 12, 2016, a mass shooting terrorist attack and hate crime occurred inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, United States. Fifty people died, including the gunman, who was killed by Orlando police after a three-hour standoff. An additional 53 people were injured. It was the deadliest mass shooting by a single gunman and the deadliest incident of violence against LGBT people in U.S. history, and the deadliest terrorist attack in the U.S. since the September 11 attacks in 2001.”³

Questions - Why?

At times like this, “Why?”
When things like this happen, I find myself with a lot of questions:
Why do things like this happen?
Why would someone do this?
Why would God allow this?
Why is violence like this part of life in America?
Who is to blame?
Why did the shooter decide that destruction of people made sense?
Do I, somehow, have part of the blame?

I don’t have good answers for most of these questions.
It just doesn’t make sense.

Transition

However, our faith has some response and I want to share a couple key elements of our faith that connect with the events of this week.

Key Faith Elements

Evil is not God’s plan

Let me be clear:
Evil is not God’s plan.
The Orlando nightclub shootings were not part of God’s plan.
Massacre, murder and tragedy will never be God’s will.

³ Wikipedia contributors, "2016 Orlando nightclub shooting," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2016_Orlando_nightclub_shooting&oldid=725758006 (accessed June 17, 2016).

Evil is never, ever God's intention.

So, why would an all powerful and all loving God allow such evil to happen?

Humans have Free Will

It happened because of the choices that we make as humans.

Humans have free will - the opportunity to choose.

Beginning of Time

This story goes back to the very beginning of time. When God created humanity and placed us in the middle of a beautiful garden he gave us free will – the ability to consider options and make choices. We have the opportunity to choose good and turn toward God or evil and turn away from God.

The ability to choose to freely and heartily love God and our neighbor comes with the ability to choose to turn away from God and act out evil.

There are evil powers in the world

There are powers of darkness in the world and in these events we witnessed them at work.

What happened was evil.

Whatever was going on in the mind of the shooter, it was a dark and twisted view of reality. The gunman did not realize or chose to ignore the choices that could have been made for good. The gunman had allowed his mind to be taken over so completely darkness that he made a choice to kill others.

He gave in to the darkness.

He chose evil.

Scripture from James

This connects with the passage of scripture from James that you will find on a card which you can take home with you today.

[Show scripture card and talk about connections of scripture]

Transition

Two of my colleagues in the Texas Annual Conference wrote a statement in response, which I want to share with you this morning. They begin with a passage of scripture from Matthew 2:18:

An Open Letter in Response to Orlando

A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.⁴

“We ... acknowledge that in the face of the tragic deaths of forty-nine beloved children of God, there are no words that can truly console. As God’s heart breaks for each and every victim so do all our hearts. The families of the slain and those that knew and loved them weep as Rachel did. Our tears join theirs and those of others who grieve this hour for lives lost and the state of the world in which such terrible acts occur.

Violence of any kind causes ripples of pain and hurt far beyond the people immediately affected, and we grieve with all of those feeling pain, hurt, sorrow, and loss. For the LGBTQ community, for the Latino community, and for everyone touched by this deep evil, we are profoundly grieved. We are overwhelmed by the loss of these forty-nine lives, each and every one a beloved child of God. We recognize that, in addition to the massacre of these precious lives, feelings of safety and places of sanctuary were also victims of violence and evil.

In our grief, we are called to repentance. Whenever and wherever we have not worked to eradicate hate and fear in our world, we ask for God’s forgiveness. God loves people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and so do we. By God’s grace we believe we are called to work together to build God’s peaceful, loving kingdom on Earth.

We will do this together, and we will do it by renouncing the spiritual forces of wickedness and the evil powers of this world. We will do this together, and we will do it by accepting the power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. We will do this together, and we will do it by loving radically and by trusting in the Lord of life, love, and the dance: Jesus Christ.”⁵

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that the Holy Spirit comes “to help our weakness. We don’t know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans.”⁶

⁴ Matthew 2:18

⁵ <https://unitytac.wordpress.com/2016/06/16/orlando/>

⁶ Romans 8:26, CEB.

Call to Action

Taking a moment and remembering some of the basics of our faith can be helpful in difficult times. So, we are going to take some time to do that.

The Apostle's Creed expresses some of the essence of our faith.

Invitation

Hold the last few days on your heart, mind and soul.

Breathe.

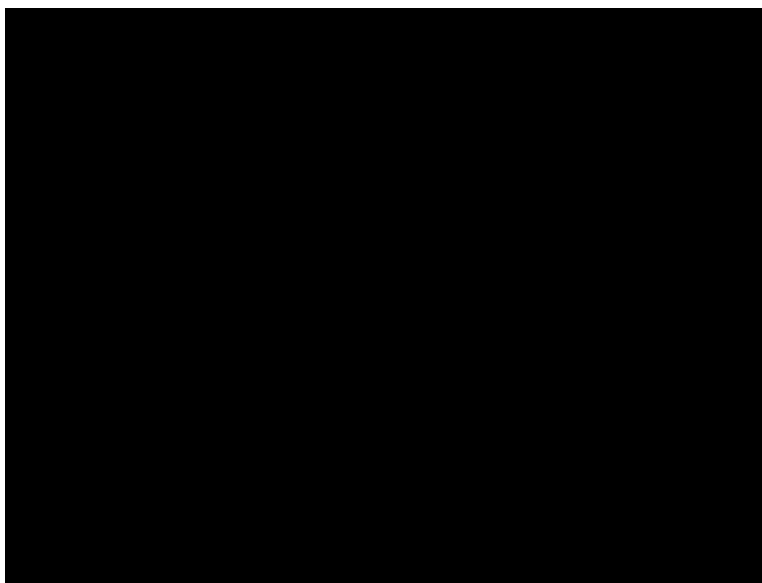
Come Holy Spirit.

Join with me as we close in prayer.

Closing Prayer

There is a video of the Apostle's Creed. It will play as the closing prayer.

The Apostle's Creed



Come, Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Amen.